



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/give-thanks-reducing-food-loss-and-waste>

Give Thanks by Reducing Food Loss and Waste



USAID/DCA

Thanksgiving is a day for Americans to give thanks for the abundance we enjoy. It is a day of feasts, when people come together over a meal celebrated with many traditions. This year, let's aim to incorporate a new tradition: reducing food waste.

Hunger is one of the most pressing global development challenges. Roughly 795 million people worldwide suffer from chronic hunger. The importance of addressing this challenge is reflected in the new United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, notably Goal 2, which aims to eliminate hunger and malnutrition. This is a challenge we can meet: the reality is that we already produce enough food to feed the 7 billion people on the planet, and it is estimated that we already produce enough for the population of 9 billion people we can expect by 2050. Food insecurity exists when families aren't able to access this food, when they may not have the means to purchase it, or it may be in short supply where they live.

One-third of the food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted globally. This is about 1.3 billion tons per year. Developing and developed countries share the burden for this problem in different ways. In low-income countries, food is often lost before it reaches markets, while in medium- and high-income countries, food is more often wasted after it reaches markets or is purchased.

In medium- and high-income countries, most food is wasted at the consumption stage. This means that the food is either discarded at the market stage or in individual homes, even though the food is often fit for human consumption. Reducing waste requires an increased awareness of what and how much we are buying, and ensuring that excess food is redirected to those in need. To help address this serious problem, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency announced a [Food Waste Challenge](#) with the first-ever national food waste reduction goal, calling for a 50-percent reduction by 2030.

In low-income countries, food is most often lost and wasted due to financial, managerial, and technical limitations in harvesting techniques, storage and cooling facilities, infrastructure, packaging and marketing systems. Many small holder farmers in these countries suffer from food insecurity and poverty. Reducing food loss could improve food security by increasing the amount of food available for sale and consumption. [Feed the Future](#), the U.S. government's signature global hunger and food security initiative, helps address this problem in the areas where we invest. With the help of American [private companies](#) and universities, innovative mechanisms to reduce food loss and waste have been a part of this initiative.

To meet the future needs and demands of a more affluent and growing world population, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) projects that global agricultural production will need to be 60 percent higher than 2005 levels. Reaching this target in an environmentally sustainable manner will require adoption of more climate-smart practices by food producers, and significant decreases in food loss and waste worldwide

The environmental impact of producing food that is eventually lost or wasted is significant; freshwater use, land inefficiency and greenhouse gas emissions of agriculture are staggering. Globally, the total volume of water used each year to produce food that is wasted is equivalent to half the volume of Lake Erie. Produced but unused crops occupy nearly 1.4 billion hectares of land—or approximately 30% of the world's agricultural land. And, the carbon footprint of food produced and not eaten is estimated to be equivalent to 3.3 gigatonnes of CO₂. This means that if food loss and waste were ranked with countries in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, combined they would be third, after China and the United States. Food waste and loss undermine global efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions, protect land and biodiversity, and conserve water.

Reducing food loss and waste may partially curb the need to increase production, which would in turn help protect our natural resources and mitigate climate change—another goal the global community agreed to in September, and will seek to build on in Paris at the end of this month. As we celebrate Thanksgiving with a traditional feast, let's each do our part to waste less. Small contributions to food security are perhaps the greatest way we can give thanks.

This post originally [appeared](#) on the U.S. Department of State blog.